**THE ACTS**

**- Commission communication “The European Union and the Arctic region**”(November 2008)

<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:DKEY=483680:EN:NOT>

*Communications are acts – not legally binding – where the Commission expresses its view on a given subject, accompanying suggestions for action. They need to be endorsed by the Council and the Parliament before being considered an expression of EU view or intentions*.

The communication aimed at achieving a structured and coordinated approach to Arctic matters, as a first layer of a EU Arctic policy. It indicates a number of policy objectives, accompanied by specific proposals for action, clustered around three main objectives :

* Protecting and preserving the Arctic in unison with its population, this being the priority goal
* Promoting sustainable use of resources
* Contributing to enhanced Arctic multilateral governance

**- Council conclusions on Arctic issues** (December 2009 )

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/111814.pdf>

*Council conclusions, while not legally binding , are as a rule adopted by consensus, and therefore express the unanimous political agreement by all Member States on the matter examined, and do often form the basis for further consideration or action*

The conclusions give a general blessing to the Commission ideas. The Council approves the three main objectives indicated by the Commission, indicates as bases for an EU Arctic policy international measures to mitigate climate change, the respect of sensitivities of ecosystems and of needs and rights of Arctic residents in EU policies and actions, “*responsible, sustainable and cautious action in view of new possibilities for transport, natural resource extraction and other entrepreneurial activities* “ (ACCESS mandate!) , balance between EU and Member States’ interests, It further lists sectoral priorities and actions.

**- European Parliament resolution on a sustainable EU policy for the High North** (January 2011)

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2011-0024+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

adopted following an own initiative report.

*Parliament resolutions are acts with no binding value, aimed at giving political impetus to a legislative or political process*.

The resolution covers an even wider ground than the previous acts, which makes it quite difficult to identify a clear message. It is broadly compatible with the pronouncements of Commission and Council. While it maintains attention to environmental and indigenous peoples issues, a comparatively greater emphasis on the interest of resource exploitation can however be detected .

- **The future, as foreseen**

The Council in its conclusions had invited the Commission to present a progress report by June 2011. The report is still in preparation and should be issued in January/February 2012.

There is talk of a more political document to be prepared by June 2012.

**THE ACTORS**

The **Commission** is the leading EU institution for Arctic issues. As such, with the Council’s blessing, it applied for permanent observer status in the Arctic Council in December 2008. No decision on its admission having been reached in 2009 or 2011, the Commission continues to take part in Arctic Council meetings on an ad hoc observer basis, and contributes to the work of some AC Working Groups. A renewed application to become permanent observer will have to be examined in the light of AC agreed criteria.

*Among the other applicants for permanent observer is Italy, which if admitted would bring to 7 the number of EU Member States permanent observers in the AC*

The **European External Action Service**, instituted by the Lisbon Treaty end 2009 to assist the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is independent on the Commission, and has succeeded the extinct Commission DG for External Relations in its task of principal coordinator of Arctic issues in the EU (see <http://eeas.europa.eu/arctic_region/index_en.htm> ). The desk officer responsible for all Arctic issues (Barents cooperation, Northern Dimension, Arctic Council) is an EEAS official, [Zuzanna.Bieniuk@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Zuzanna.Bieniuk@ec.europa.eu) +322 2969643.

The Commission DG competent for maritime affairs (**DG MARE**) appears, as before, to share the lead in EU Arctic policy and maintains its own Arctic website ((<http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/sea_basins/arctic_ocean/index_en.htm> ) .

In fact, the sharing of work between EEAS and Commission is quite unclear and un-formalised – DG MARE Commissioner Maria Damanaki seems to be the one frequently speaking on behalf of the EU on Arctic issues.

The EEAS chairs an **interservice group on Arctic issues** composed of officials from the different DGs, originally established to provide expertise in all Arctic- relevant fields for the preparation of the 2008 Commission communication. The group, in which also the European Environment Agency takes part, meets fairly regularly.

The members of the interservice group more relevant for ACCESS appear to be

for **environmenta**l issues DG ENV [jaimie.reynolds@ec.europa.eu](mailto:jaimie.reynolds@ec.europa.eu) +3222959053

for **transports** DG MOVE [josep.casanovas@ec.europa.eu](mailto:josep.casanovas@ec.europa.eu) +322 2996088

for **maritime affairs** DG MARE [matthew.king@ec.europa.eu](mailto:matthew.king@ec.europa.eu) +322 2955077 and Brian Toll +322 2955718

for **energy** DG ENER [marcus.lippold@ec.europa.eu](mailto:marcus.lippold@ec.europa.eu) +322 2986236 and [zoltan.deak@ec.europa.eu](mailto:zoltan.deak@ec.europa.eu) +3222985351

for **research** DG RTD [susana.calsamiglia-mendlewicz@ec.europa.eu](mailto:susana.calsamiglia-mendlewicz@ec.europa.eu)

for the **European Environment Agency** [Nikolaj.Bock@eea.europa.eu](mailto:Nikolaj.Bock@eea.europa.eu)

The different DGs of the Commission seem to have stepped up their participation in Arctic Council Working Parties, where in the past often only the European Environment Agency was active.

**...........**

For the **European Parliament**, Vice-President Diana Wallis has been the MEP consistently more interested in Arctic issue, recently concentrating on the issue of drillings in the Arctic.

An official *European Parliament Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development* has established a sub-group with the Arctic as its main theme, which held some Arctic-relevant gatherings but has not been very active lately <http://www.ebcd.org/en/EP_Intergroup_CCBSD/>

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A *EU-Arctic Forum* was set up in parallel with the preparation of the EP report, with the aim to provide MEPs with an open platform for learning about and debating Arctic issues. It is sponsored by some MEPs and has held so far a number of high-profile gatherings, as well as issuing a fairly regular newsletter. It is not however an official emanation from Parliament.

<http://eu-arctic-forum.org/about-the-eu-arctic-forum-in-the-european-parliament/>